



# United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Southern Nevada District Office  
4701 N. Torrey Pines Drive  
Las Vegas, NV 89130  
<http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/lvfo.1.html>

**JUL 28 2015**

In Reply Refer To:  
(NVS01000) 6300

## **NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSED ACTION** **LANDS OF THE NATIONAL WILDERNESS PRESERVATION SYSTEM**

### **RAINBOW MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS**

Dear Interested Party:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is required to inform all affected or interested persons or organizations about any proposed action or unauthorized activity occurring within BLM Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas.

Previously, BLM has authorized the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) to conduct the capture of wildlife within Wilderness Areas for monitoring data. NDOW's proposed action would enable the monitoring of wildlife movements in and near wildlife crossings along State Route 160 near Mountain Springs.

#### **Background**

The BLM and the NDOW are committed to the maintenance and restoration of wildlife populations in Nevada within the jurisdictions of their respective agencies. Coordination and cooperation where jurisdictions involve designated Wilderness, is essential in order that BLM and NDOW may accomplish their respective missions relating to management of wildlife and their habitats as well as the Congressional mandate to manage Wilderness areas under the Wilderness Act of 1964.

According to the Clark County Conservation of Public Land and Natural Resources Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-282) Sec. 208(b) Management Activities – "In furtherance of the purposes and principles of the Wilderness Act, management activities to maintain or restore fish and wildlife populations....may be carried out within wilderness areas designated by this title where consistent with relevant wilderness management plans, in accordance with appropriate policies such as those set forth in Appendix B of House Report 101-405, including the occasional and temporary use of motorized vehicles if such use....would promote healthy, viable, and more naturally distributed wildlife populations that would enhance wilderness values and accomplish those purposes with the minimum impact necessary to reasonably accomplish the task." And (c) Existing Activities – "....the State may continue to use aircraft, including helicopters, to survey, capture, transplant, monitor....wildlife populations."

The Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) plans to widen and straighten State Route 160 in response to traffic congestion and public safety issues occurring along the highway corridor. Strategies proposed by NDOT to mitigate for the negative impacts of corridor improvements on wildlife include the construction of smooth-wire fencing along the right-of-way of SR160 and the inclusion of flashing hazard signs (FHWA-NV-EA 13.01). Neither of these strategies are expected to result in increased permeability to wildlife and reduction in risk of vehicle/wildlife conflicts. Following consultation with NDOW, and the completion of an environmental assessment (FHWA-NV-EA 13.01) the finding of no significant impact (FONSI) for the SR160 corridor improvements indicates that further evaluation of potential impacts of the project to wildlife would occur, including the investigation of alternatives to smooth fencing as a method to improve wildlife connectivity.

The NDOT has identified a need to collect information on highway corridor permeability along SR 160 for bighorn sheep (*Ovis Canadensis nelsoni*), mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), and elk (*Cervus elaphus*) in the Red Rock Escarpment – Mountain Springs area that may indicate the need for one or two wildlife crossing structures.

### **Location**

#### **Rainbow Mountain Wilderness**

- Township 20S, Range 58E, Sections 31, 32
- Township 21S, Range 58E, Sections 4-9, 16-21, 27-34
- Township 22S, Range 58E, Sections 3-10, 15-18, 20-22, 27, 28

### **Proposed Action**

NDOW proposes to conduct monitoring of wildlife movements to adequately quantify the frequency and location of wildlife crossings near Mountain Springs. Monitoring will involve the capture and radio collaring of bighorn sheep, mule deer, and elk occurring near the SR160 corridor using a helicopter and aerial net-gun. The number of animals captured is expected to be approximately 15 each of bighorn sheep, deer, and elk. Capture methods would be the same for each species. The helicopter would be operated at altitudes generally below 300 feet AGL (above ground level) while the crew (3-5 people) attempts to locate animals and while ferrying to and from a base of operations. In capture mode, the pilot would maneuver the aircraft close to ground level. The net-gunner aboard the helicopter would deploy the net over the front (head and shoulders) of the selected animal so the enveloping net would encompass the animal for capture. The capture phase may be completed in 2-5 days.

Once an animal has been netted, the helicopter may hover close to the ground or land briefly allowing a handler to dismount. The handler works the animal out of the net, and applies hobbles and blindfolds. After securing the animal in a transport bag, the animal would be sling-loaded beneath the aircraft to the base of operations. Bases of operations or staging areas would be located outside of designated wilderness boundaries. This action includes fitting all animals with radio-collars for monitoring and subsequent release to a location outside the Rainbow Mountain Wilderness. Each radio collar will be equipped with GPS tracking technologies to provide real-time and high-resolution movement data of the three species occurring in the Spring Mountains.

Data will be compiled, analyzed, and summarized to provide recommendations to NDOT on the future design of SR160, which will be due in the spring of 2017.

Please submit comments to the District Manager for consideration and use in evaluating and processing the proposed action at the address below. Alternately, comments may be sent to [blm\\_nv\\_sndowilderness@blm.gov](mailto:blm_nv_sndowilderness@blm.gov). All comments must be received by the closing date of this comment period on August 31, 2015. A decision on the proposed action and implementation is anticipated for October- November of 2015. If you have any questions regarding this notification please contact Steve Leslie, Wilderness Planner at 702-515-5054.



Timothy Z. Smith  
District Manager  
Bureau of Land Management  
Southern Nevada District Office  
4701 N. Torrey Pines Drive  
Las Vegas, NV 89130

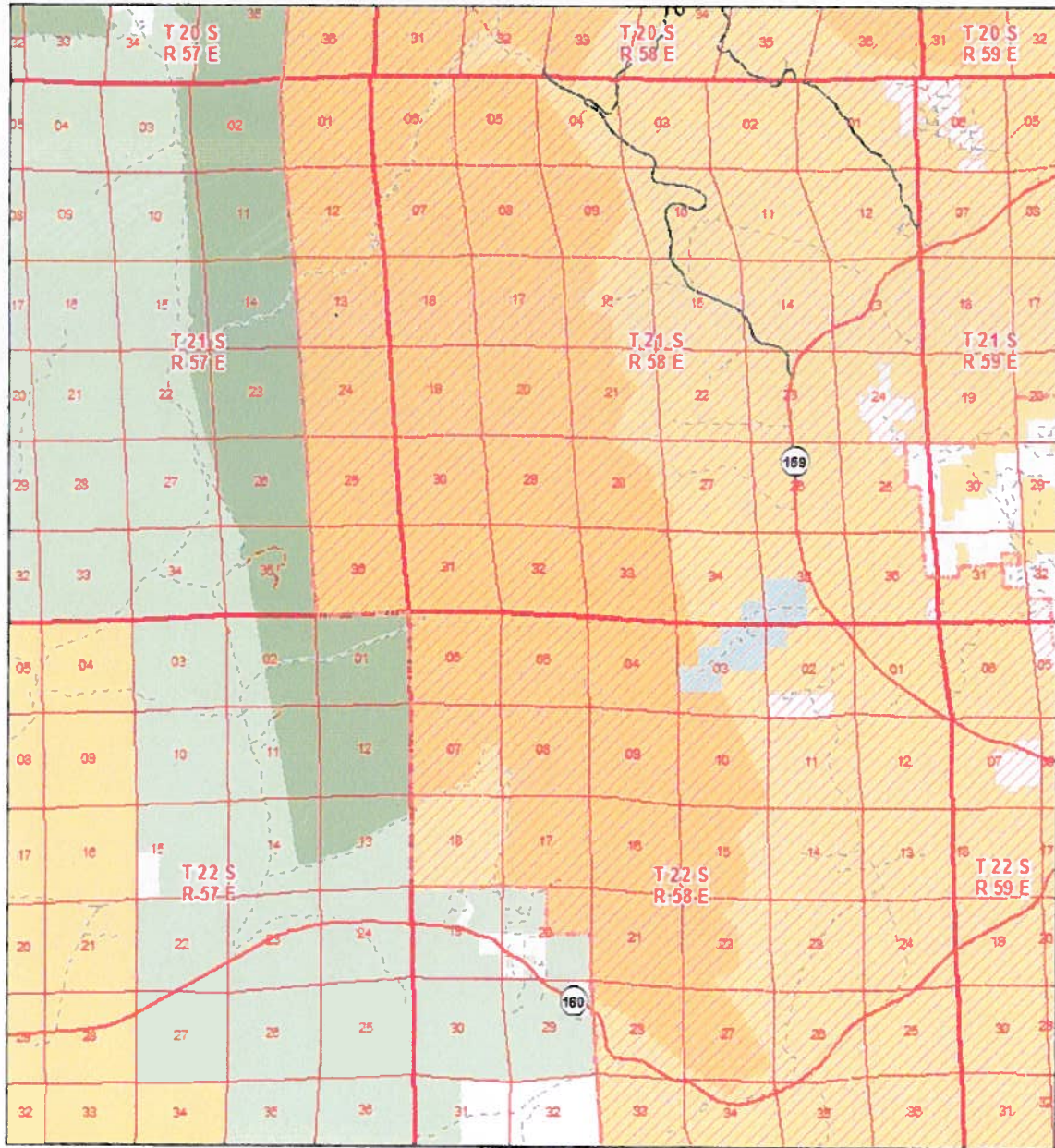
Attachments:

- 1 - Location of Proposed Action

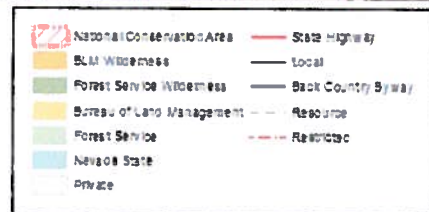
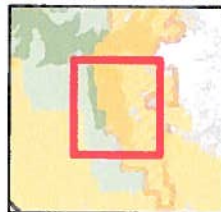


# **Attachment 1** **Location of Proposed Action**

## **Rainbow Mountain Wilderness**



No Warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data.



0 1.25 2.5 Miles